nothing (something)

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nothing (something)

by ladybundle

Summary

“What do you need, Johnny?” She’s a little teary. Like she knows something he doesn't.

“Nothing,” Johnny says. Cause it’s the fucking truth.

Need isn’t the same thing as want, Kathy. What I want is something I’m never getting.

Notes

This movie was so much more homosexual than I was anticipating 😳. Like I did not realize it’s literally a love triangle. Like I just watched an interview with the director saying he cast Austin cause he was the most attractive person he had ever seen and he hadn’t cast Jodie or Tom yet and he cast Austin because the audience needed to believe that these two people were in love with this guy. Like hello. I’m paraphrasing slightly, but that was the jist of it.

See the end of the work for more notes

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What do you need, Johnny?

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They didn't have a TV in their living room when Johnny was a kid. But sneaking into the movies wasn't hard. And it was better than being home.

He buys one for him and Betty before he gets them a couch.

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It's summer and hot as fuck. One of the fans is broken. The others are turning too slow, barely moving the soupy air in the dim bar. Johnny is on his third beer, listening to Brucie and Zipco snap at each other. Tempers shortening the more the temperature climbs. Johnny lifts the sweating beer to his forehead, sighing at the press of cool bottle, closing his eyes and wishing he could close his fucking ears too. Wahoo giggles high and squeaky, pool balls clacking loudly as Corky groans in disappointment.

Fucking Christ.

The door creaks, light footsteps coming slowly towards the bartop. When he opens his eyes, there's a kid sitting opposite him, solemn and silent. Johnny lowers his bottle, straightening his back. He keeps quiet, waiting for him to speak. The bartender swings by, bringing another round. Johnny takes a swig of the fresh cold beer.

"Well?" Johnny asks after the kid seems to have finished sizing him up. *Gunna make me wait all day?*

"Heard about your club," he says eventually, voice low and soft.

Somewhere off to the side, Brucie and Zipco have fallen silent.

"You did, huh?"

The kid nods slowly, not offering anything else, settling one elbow on the bartop like he's perfectly comfortable, head turning to take in the rest of the room with a deliberate unblinking gaze. Johnny purses his lips, trying to fight back the sudden urge to laugh.

"Man of few words," Johnny says instead, waving the bartender over.

“I like that. Have a drink. I’m Johnny.”

The kid’s eyes swing back to him, nodding again as he reaches for the offered beer with long slender fingers.

“Benny.”

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Brando wasn’t the first. He knew long before that. And promptly made himself forget. Or at least as well as he could. But that kinda thing sits inside of you. Just waiting to strike.

Brando wasn’t the last either.

———

Johnny’s a different person when he’s on a bike. The one he wants to be. The one he was supposed to be. It’s like flying or something. Johnny’s no poet. But when he’s on a bike, he kinda wishes he was. Wishes he could make someone else understand. Understand how important the slap of the wind against his face is. How vital and alive he feels with his hands wrapped around the metal handles, the bike roaring under him, flying across the black asphalt.

But he doesn’t need to be a poet. Because when he turns and looks at Benny, he knows he understands too.

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The sun is just slipping below the horizon, the clouds a deep orange. Johnny wanders away from the crackling fire Zipco started, two beers in his hands, walking towards the lone figure at the edge of the trees. When he reaches him, Benny takes the offered bottle but doesn’t drink, lips pursing around the last of his cigarette. Johnny watches the smoke leave his open mouth and curl around his face.

He clears his throat, forcing himself to look forward. They stand together in silence, the bugs starting to hum musically as the darkness descends. Out of the corner of his eye he can see Benny take a swig. But he doesn’t turn to watch his throat bob. Doesn’t look at the way his long lashes curl when he lifts his face to the sky, watching as the stars appear.

Johnny clenches his jaw, swallowing an uneasy feeling along with his next gulp of beer.

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Sometimes he lets himself think about it. Heart beating too fast, hand quick and furtive.

The shame and disgust always find him. And he tells himself he won't do it again.

It's a lie.

———

When he sees Kathy, he knows something is coming. Like he can see the fucking future or some shit. He hears her biting, sarcastic little quips. Her confidence despite the situation. Her sharpness, quick and clever. Pretty too.

Johnny knows what's going to happen as soon as Benny straddles the chair and looks at her. Benny's got eyes like a baby cow. If baby cows had blue eyes with long sandy lashes that curl like a girl's.

And they work like a charm.

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Kathy marries Benny. Because who wouldn't.

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It doesn't change much really. Kathy's a good addition. A ready talker. Social. Gets along with everyone.

But he sees some other things too. Sees the way Kathy would like things to be between her and Benny. But it can't be. It won't be. You can't make a person like Benny be who you want them to be. *She'll figure it out eventually.*

Johnny sees the way she sometimes looks at him too. A little pinch between her brows, gaze too searching.

———

And she punches him in the face with it eventually, sitting at a table in his fucking bar, tears in her eyes like a wronged wife on a TV show.

"You can't have him."

I fucking know.

———

Benny's foot heals up eventually.

And Kathy keeps the ring on her finger.

And Benny keeps on living in her house.

And Johnny keeps on being the leader of the club, Benny's rejection ringing in his ears.

———

And it's good for a while. A good while.

———

Johnny can hear Benny's soft laugh off to the side as they stumble a little further into the dark woods. He can hear the loud sounds of revelry just outside the line of trees. Johnny drains the last of his bottle, tossing it into the darkness and giggling when he hears a crash.

Fuck. He hasn't been this drunk in a while.

"Hey give me some of yours. I'm out," Johnny mumbles.

"You threw your bottle," Benny says.

"Yeah, cause I was out."

Sighing, Benny passes him the whisky bottle and he takes a pull from the wet rim, watching as Benny slumps back against a tree. Johnny takes another swig, wiping his mouth with the back of his sleeve, stepping forward into Benny's space, offering back the bottle.

There's a little wash of moonlight through the trees, illuminating one pretty eye, lashes curling up like a woman's. Except Benny's not a woman. Johnny stays as still as a stone, eyes not leaving Benny's face. They are both drunk. That's his excuse. Benny's too if he needs one. Johnny doesn't move back. Doesn't drop his gaze. He can smell him. Can almost taste the heat from his body. It's like Johnny can feel his heartbeat through his whole body, pulsing loudly in his ears. The air is cold, wind whipping through the trees. But he doesn't feel it. His free hand moves, resting lightly on Benny's hip. Just to steady himself.

That's what he says in his mind, a little frantic.

Benny's the first one to move away. Back towards the fire, tall lithe body silhouetted by the bright flames, his whisky bottle held between two fingers. Back towards Kathy. Cause this isn't a fucking movie. Not that what's happening inside of Johnny is something that you'd see in any goddamn movie.

When Johnny finally makes it back to the fire, he feels frozen solid.

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He thinks Benny's father used to hit him when he was a kid. Not that Johnny's hadn't. But he thinks it might have been worse for Benny. Just a feeling.

———

Johnny knows something fucking awful has happened by the stunned look on Cal's face when he sets down the phone. He lets him stumble through a few sentences before standing and moving quickly towards the back door, pushing out into the alley behind the bar. Brucie's name ringing in his ears like a clanging fucking church bell.

Johnny pulls in a few breaths, blinking quickly. A few moments pass before the door swings open and familiar footsteps echo in the alley. He can hear the leather squeaking as he settles against the wall. Maybe a minute passes in silence, Johnny's quick breaths the loudest sound in their little secluded spot. Benny has always been okay with waiting in silence. Finally, Johnny opens his mouth.

"Don't let that happen to you," he says, voice sounding a little shaky. "Just don't. You hear me?"

Johnny turns to look at him, watching as Benny nods. *Brucie's gone. Fucking gone. Just like that.*

"You gotta be more careful," Johnny says firmly. "You gotta be more fucking careful."

His heart is starting to slow, thank Christ. Johnny wipes clumsily at his eyes with the heel of his hand. *Fuck. Jesus Fucking Christ.*

"You too," Benny says softly.

Johnny drops his hand, sniffing.

“Huh?”

“Don’t let it happen to you either.”

His large eyes are open wide and vulnerable. He looks younger than usual. Sometimes Johnny forgets he’s young. He moves closer, reaching out to clutch at his shoulder.

“I won’t, kid.”

Benny’s head bends a little, the remnants of his gel fighting to keep his soft hair from falling forward. Johnny relaxes his grip, not dropping his hand.

———

Johnny can hear one of the girls upstairs, slamming the bathroom door. *Something fucking up.* He sighs, running a plate under the tap, rinsing off the last of the soap. Betty comes into the kitchen, taking the plate and wiping it on her apron before tugging it off. Absently, she presses a kiss to his cheek.

“I’m turning in,” she says. “Oh, I think Benny’s on the porch, hon.”

Johnny’s eyes dart to the front door as Betty moves towards the stairs. After a few moments, he goes to the door. Benny is sitting on the steps, shoulders hunched. He can see a few cigarette butts illuminated by the light of the street lamp. At the sound of the door, he gets up slowly, giving Johnny a nod as he comes inside.

“Kathy know you’re here?” He asks as Benny slumps onto the floor in front of the couch, reaching for the remote. He shrugs, clicking on the TV.

“Right,” Johnny says, moving to the kitchen and taking the phone off the hook.

It only rings a few times before she picks up.

“Hey, Kathy.”

“Oh,” she says. Like she knows why he’s calling.

“Just wanted you to know, Benny’s here. So you don’t gotta worry,” he says. He feels an odd sort of giddy pride at the words.

“Oh yeah?” Her voice sounds bland over the phone. But he’s not

fooled.

“Yeah.”

There’s a little crackle. Like she’s sighing or something.

“Okay, yeah.”

Then a click.

Johnny opens the fridge before going back to the living room.

“Bewitched?” Johnny asks skeptically, offering Benny cold beer. Their fingers touch on the neck of the bottle.

“She’s pretty,” Benny says. He’s pointing at the girl on screen. Like he needs to defend his enjoyment of a sitcom about a witch. Johnny’s seen *Bewitched* before. He knows shit.

“Yeah,” Johnny agrees.

She is. Blonde, pretty pink bowed lips, cute smile. Beautiful. Like a movie star. Johnny pulls his eyes away from Benny, leaning back on the couch with a sigh. Benny doesn’t move from the floor. A few minutes go by and he laughs brightly at something the witch girl says. Johnny’s chest clenches.

Yeah. Yeah this is it.

———

But somethings gotta give eventually.

———

Roach is the last straw for him. Or maybe it's Kathy. Or maybe it’s Johnny, pushing like he shouldn’t have for the last fucking time. *Can’t make a person like Benny be who you want them to be.*

He feels sick to his fucking stomach, standing on the damp dirty asphalt, listening to the sound of Benny leaving his life for good.

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It stopped being fun a while ago. But he stops even pretending it means anything anymore. It doesn’t mean anything. Not with Benny gone.

———

What do you need, Johnny?

The air is sharp like a knife. The kinda cold it isn't supposed to be yet. Maybe she'll let him go inside. Not that he thinks she's lying. He isn't here. Johnny can feel it.

"What do you need, Johnny?" She's a little teary. Like she knows something he doesn't.

"Nothing," Johnny says. Cause it's the fucking truth.

Need isn't the same thing as want, Kathy. What I want is something I'm never getting.

And she's looking at him like she knows anyway. Knows that there's something stuck in his throat. In his chest. She's looking at him different. Much different than that day in the bar. The only time she said it out loud. Angry and scared. For Benny. For herself. Thinking her words would shock him. Face morphing a little when they clearly hadn't.

She's not angry now. She looks almost as tired as he feels. And she's not going to make him say it. But for a different reason now. Because they share something. They understand each other. The thing that once kept them at odds is only a ghost of a memory now. Something that will haunt them for the rest of both their lives.

Johnny gets into the car, grunting as his back twinges. Fuck, he's getting old. He turns the key in the ignition.

Indiana, huh?

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End Notes

He cried. He cried about Johnny's death because he looooooved him .

Yes, Kathy and Benny are watching and enjoying the heck out of Bewitched in that hotel room. As they should. Benny is a Bewitched fan confirmed.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!